

NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 1 - March 2010

Message from Ambassador Michael Michalak

Dear Exchange Alumni,

I am pleased to introduce this first issue of Hanoi's Exchange Alumni Newsletter. You are part of a unique group in Viet Nam who have had the experience of going to America to participate in one of several different exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. One common element among all of these programs is very simple: the exchange of ideas. We feel that people to people contact is the best way to allow for this exchange and to foster mutual understanding and break down barriers.



The first half of the exchange occurred when each of you traveled to the U.S. and interacted with my fellow Americans. Whether you were in the U.S. for a year or as little as a week, I am sure that you had a memorable experience and came away with a better understanding of America's values and culture. The second half of the exchange is now up to you. I hope that each of you came back to Viet Nam with an eagerness to share your experiences with your family, colleagues, friends and neighbors.

The ability for these exchange programs to achieve their intended goal of bringing the American and Vietnamese people closer together rests on all of our shoulders. The U.S. Embassy remains committed to supporting alumni through special programs and grants so I encourage you to stay in touch and be a frequent visitor to the exchange alumni website http://alumni.state.gov. Through this website, you can also interact with your fellow alumni and further benefit from your exchange experience.

I look forward to many opportunities in the future where we will have the chance to continue to exchange our views and learn from one another.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Michael Michalak





Ambassador Michael Michaelak with past participants of different exchange programs at his annual receptions for Vietnamese State Alumni

Inside this issue:

FY09 Winning 3 Alumni Projects

Vietnamese Women 4 Navigate Life With Courage

Fulbrighter Helps 5
Farmers through
Text Messaging

Alumni News 6

Humphrey Alumnus 8 Leads Workshops on Environmental Leadership

10

One Year for
Dreams that Will
Never End

Online Resource 11
Center

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Greetings from Mr. David Moyer, U.S. Embassy Assistant Public Affairs Officer

Dear State Alumni,

Welcome to the first of many issues of this alumni newsletter. Let me start by introducing myself. I am new to Viet Nam and to the Southeast Asia region. Prior to coming to Viet Nam, I was working in Seoul Korea. I am very excited to be in Hanoi and to learn more about the culture and the people here. I received a warm welcome by the Vietnamese people and hope that I can repay their hospitality.

It is our intention to provide this newsletter and other resources in order to continue our communication with you to find new and exciting ways to work together. I hope that you will also communicate with us and share any ideas that you have about how you can continue to make an impact in your community and in your workplace. Another important place for each of you to communicate is on our Alumni portal site. Please take the time to register on this site if you haven't already and visit it frequently to see what's new: http://alumni.state.gov.

I hope to have the chance to meet more alumni at various Embassy events where we will do our best to include alumni. Please also invite us to events in your community so that we can better reach out to a wider audience here in Vietnam. I hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,

Dave Moyer, Assistant Public Affairs Officer

Fulbright Alumni gather in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City







Two regional gatherings for Fulbright alumni were held in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in December 2009.

Hosted by Consul General Ken Fairfax at New World Hotel on December 4, the reception in HCMC attracted sixty alumni in different program years who had a chance to network and share experiences with the Fulbright community.

At a similar reception at Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, Am-

bassador Michael Michalak extended his warm welcome to seventy-five participants.

These gatherings are organized on an annual basis to provide alumni a chance to reunite with each other and with the U.S. Mission Vietnam staff.

At the events, the Ambassador and the Consul General also presented certificates of successful completion of the Fulbright Program to the recently returning alumni.

Announcement of FY09 Alumni Project Competition winners

On September 14, 2009, Ambassador Michael Michalak announced three winning projects of the U.S. Embassy's FY09 Alumni Mini-grant Competition funded by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at a ceremony widely covered by national and local media.

The winning projects focus on training of professional ethics to journalism students, improving university student affairs in disadvantaged areas and teaching skills and leadership development for vocational teachers. The projects were initiated by three groups of Fulbright, Humphrey and Volvis alumni in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho.

These projects were selected from 14 proposals submitted by alumni of various U.S. Government funded educational and exchange programs for this competition now in its second year.

Alumni Mini-grant Competition is an annual competition designed to assist alumni of USG exchange programs to build on concepts and ideas they explored during their exchange period by providing grants of up to \$15,000 to alumni or organizations



Ambassador Michael Michalak hands over a nominal check to Ms. Do Minh Thuy (Fulbright 2004), a winner in the competition.

with which alumni are working.

Previously, four different grants from ECA had been offered to different alumni groups to conduct projects ranging from setting up a network of American Studies scholars, State Alumni festival and exhibition, environmental leadership training and establishing a network of volunteers to help victims of domestic violence in Hanoi and neighboring provinces.

Summaries of three winning projects:

Hanoi: Training of Journalism Professional Ethics for Journalism Students in Hanoi (\$5,000)

Project Summary: This project includes four workshops for fourth-year students majoring in journalism at universities in Hanoi. It is aimed at empowering potential young Vietnamese journalists by providing them with knowledge and awareness of ethical issues, enhancing their code of ethics, and improving their reporting and writing skills.

Grantees: A group of Fulbright and Humphrey alumni who studied journalism in the U.S.

• Ho Chi Minh City: Improving student affairs at universities in disadvantaged areas of Vietnam: Best practices learned from universities in the United States (\$4,980)

Project Summary: Through a four day workshop, this project will provide 30 university administrators from 6 universities in the Mekong Delta with knowledge and American best practices on student affairs such as the academic advising program, student leadership program, counseling program, career development program, life skill development program, and the community service program.

Grantees: A group of Fulbright and VOLVIS alumni who studied Educational Administration in the U.S.

• Can Tho: Training of pedagogical skills and leadership development for teachers at vocational schools and community colleges in the Mekong Delta region (\$5,000)

Project Summary: This project will include three workshops for teachers at vocational schools and community colleges in the Mekong Delta region. It aims to bring American expertise to the Mekong Delta region through an American lecturer and the alumni themselves to enhance the pedagogy skills for teaching staff at these institutions as well as to improve their leadership development.

Grantees: A group of Fulbright alumni (Student and Scholar programs) at Can Tho University

Vietnamese Women Navigate Life With Courage Angela Aggeler

It takes nerves of steel just to navigate your motorbike through Hanoi's terrifying traffic scene, let alone struggle to fulfill the accepted role of a woman, wife, mother, daughter, sister while trying to expand your new role as a pro-

fessional and a career person in this wonderful but traditionbound country. Not long ago, I interviewed a brilliant young female candidate for one of our exchange programs. This 23 year old law student had lost both parents as an infant and been raised by grandparents who struggled to feed themselves. Through sheer determination and hard work, she received scholarships to an elite high school and then university. She described to me the regularity with which she was told - by family, teachers, colleagues and friends - that women shouldn't be attorneys. But she was having none of that and had committed herself not only to graduating from one of Vietnam's top law schools at the head of her class, but working to create more legal aid clinics for the underprivileged.

Women of courage abound here. An extraordinary alumnus



of our International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) started the Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women, Adolescents (CSAGA.) It's a cumbersome acronym but an inspiringly efficient

"In Vietnam, every day is women of courage day"

and active NGO. CSAGA started Vietnam's first domestic violence help line and developed a number of programs to support and protect this country's most vulnerable citizens. As with many countries around the globe, domestic violence is sadly common in Vietnam and crosses all economic and social boundaries. CSAGA was instrumental in pushing the first Vietnamese law ever to combat this scourge, though each day the phones continue to ring on their help line.

So CSAGA's founder, an active participant in the year-old Vietnam Alumni Association, took advantage of one of the alumni grant opportunities, got a couple other women's groups together, and drafted a proposal to take this

issue further down into the grass roots. The Proposal, which was happily (and unsurprisingly) accepted, includes the organization of a series of provincial workshops and seminars on combating Domestic Violence and – a first for Vietnam - the importance of volunteerism in addressing these issues. The workshops, which ran from November 2008 through April 2009, included hundreds of local commune and provincial leaders. The alumni also worked with local television to create a panel discussion on empowering women and protecting all citizens from violence in the home. And there was a victims' art exhibition planned, and a new clinic, and more seminars and, as they tell me each time we meet, so much more to do.

In Vietnam, every day is women of courage day.

About the author:

Ms. Angela Aggeler served as First Secretary for Press and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi from 2006-2009.

Fulbrighter Helps Farmers through Text Messaging Hoang Tuan Dung, Fulbrighter 2006

When Vietnamese farmers headed out for the sugarcane harvest this year, 200 of them took a new tool into the fields—their cell phones. In 2009, Dung Hoang, Microsoft's business development manager and J. William Fulbright alumnus (2008), helped farmers in Vietnam get crucial information via text messaging during the sugarcane harvest.

A pilot project sponsored by Microsoft and Tate & Lyle, one of the world's largest sugarrefining businesses, helped bring crucial harvesting information to farmers via text messaging. The project in Vietnam's Nghe An province integrated text messaging with Microsoft enterprise applications to help farmers maximize profits and improve the



Farmers like Nguyen Van Hong can use text messaging to save time and money during the sugarcane harvest.

productivity of Tate & Lyle's Nghe An factory.

The project, which launched in February 2009, was a successful example of how the power of information and communication technology (ICT) can improve people's lives in developing countries. "In this part of the world, the mobile phone is far and away the most ubiquitous technology around," Dung said. "Mobile phones are sold to more people in one year than the total PC install base from the last 30. Our proposition is how we can get people with these simple mobile devices connected to the Internet. That's what's so exciting."

"If we're going to bring ICT to the world's poorest populations, we need to leverage the technology they have in their hands"

The pilot involved a small number of farmers in Vietnam's vast sugarcane industry. At the peak of harvesting season, the single factory involved in the experiment was receiving hundreds of tons of cane every day from 25,000 small farmers. "When you think about what we're trying to do, it's quite sophisticated," said Michael Goonewardene, Tate & Lyle's general director at the factory, in interviews with Vietnamese journalists. "There are a lot of complications involved."

And if things go awry, those complications can have a real financial impact on the farmers. If they cut too soon, the sugarcane quickly starts to rot, and the quality of their product is diminished, as is their compensation



Using text messaging enables farmers to time their harvests precisely, which means they will save money.

from the factory. Typically, farmers call the factory to find out when the trucks will come to their farms, which is how they determine when to harvest. Call centers aren't always staffed, and even when they are, it can take awhile to track down the information.

Using text messaging speeds the process by enabling farmers to time their harvests precisely, which means they will save money. In a news program that aired in Vietnam, Hoang Van Dung, a sugarcane grower, said the text messaging solution let him be much more proactive in arranging his harvesting with less time and effort than before. The factory saves money, too, by dramatically reducing calls to the call center.

Based on survey results from the farmers who participated, the pilot was a great success—98 percent said they would use the service again. The success of the project offers promise for similar

(Continued on page 9)

Alumni News

Fulbright Alumni bid farewell to the Director of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam

About sixty Hanoi-based Fulbright Alumni attended a reception on February 26 along with Ambassador Michael Michalak and Deputy Chief of Mission Virginia Palmer to bid farewell to Dr. Tran Xuan Thao, Director of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. A Fulbright alumnus himself, Dr. Tran Xuan Thao has made significant contributions to the establishment of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam and to the consolidated Vietnamese Fulbright alumni community. Dr. Thao will be missed greatly by all of us involved in the Fulbright program. We wish him good luck in the new position as Provost of Tan Tao International University.

Alumni invited to DAS Alina L. Romanowski's reception

A dozen alumni were invited to a reception hosted by the Ambassador Michael Michaelak in honor of Deputy Assistant Secretary Alina L. Romanowski and other VIP guests attending the 3rd annual Education Conference held January 14-15. Many other scholars and alumni from various exchange programs also attended the conference which drew more than 600 educators from the U.S. and Vietnam for discussions on how to reach a variety of educational goals under the theme "Building Partnerships in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges for the U.S. and Vietnam".

Alumni in Ho Chi Minh City lead a workshop on university student affairs



SEAMEO RETRAC Director gives opening remarks at the workshop.

A workshop titled "Improving Student Affairs at Universities and Colleges in Disadvantaged Area of Vietnam: Best Practices Learned from Universities in the United States" was held at the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Training Center in Ho Chi Minh City on December 23, 2009. Led by a group of Fulbright alumni and an American expert from California State University Fullerton, the workshop provided 30 participants who are Vice Rectors or Directors of Student Affairs from universities and colleges in the Central Highland and Mekong Delta with American best practices and essential skills in providing student services. The workshop was a result of the Fulbright alumni group's winning proposal in the FY09 Alumni Project Competition funded by ECA.

Alumni shares exchange experience during the International Education Week

A dozens Vietnamese alumni from the Fulbright Program, Vietnam Education Foundation, Global Undergraduate Exchange Program and Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders shared their experiences of studying in the United States with hundreds of students gathered at the Embassy's American Corner in recognition of the International Education Week (IEW) from November 16-20, 2009. The presenters discussed a wide range of issues, from opportunities for going to the United States and various grants from the U.S. government available to students to tips for successful applications for admission and scholarships.



Alumni News

Undergraduate student alumni held talk shows to promote their exchange programs

A group of Hanoi-based alumni of the SUSI and UGRAD programs worked together and gave a series of talk shows to their fellow students at Hanoi University on December 31. In their presentations, the alumni provided the audience with essential information about their respective programs, their first-hand accounts of their experiences in the U.S. and tips for preparing successful applications. The Alumni Coordinator and other Embassy staff were also at the event to field questions on the application and selection process.

Can Tho based FY09 Alumni Project, November 9-13

A group of Fulbright Alumni at Can Tho University led a five day training workshop on pedagogical skills and leadership development for teachers at vocational schools and community colleges in the Mekong Delta region. The workshop is part of a winning project in the FY09 Alumni Mini-grant Competition (\$5,000 plus \$6,740 from other sources) which is organized to support State alumni build on their ideas and concepts explored during their U.S. Government sponsored exchange programs. The project aims to bring American expertise to the Mekong Delta region through an American lecturer and the alumni themselves to enhance the pedagogical skills for teaching staff at these institutions as well as to improve their leadership development.



Humphrey Fellow Leads Environmental Leadership Workshops in the Mekong Delta Region

In 2008, Mr. Nguyen Tran Nhan Tanh became the first Vietnamese Humphrey alumnus to win the Humphrey Alumni Impact Award. This award is given annually on a competitive basis to assist Humphrey Fellows in pursuing projects that use the knowledge and skills they acquired during their Humphrey Fellowship year. Nguyen Tran Nhan Tanh, currently Vice Dean of College of Technology and Environment, An Giang University, shares his write-up about the project with Vietnamese State Alumni Newsletter.

The AIA project "Training Environmental Leadership for Sustainable Water Resources Management of the Mekong River Delta (MRD), Vietnam" from September 2008 to May 2009 was developed from an ambition to use knowledge from Mr. Tanh's Humphrey year to train young environmental professionals on leadership skills. The hope is that by enhancing their leadership capacity, they will become key persons contributing to sustainable development of the Mekong River Delta in Vietnam. After the TOT (Training of Trainers), these leaders can self-lead and train other people. The project was co-sponsored by SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) under the training course "Education for Sustainable Development in a River Basin Context". Total amount of the project is 22,912 USD (8,000 USD from the AIA). The project had 5 activities.

Under support of SIDA, Activity 1 "Establishing National and Regional Leadership Networks of Water Management in the MRD and Vietnam" was conducted in a national workshop organized on September 2008, in Ho Chi Minh City. In the meeting, the Alumnus exchanged knowledge and experience on sustainable development and river basin management, shared his proposal on designing a manual for environmental leadership training, and networked with other participants.

Activity 2 "Networking with Key People in the Mekong River's Countries" was done in a workshop in Sweden organized by SIDA on October-November 2008. 27 key people from Thailand, China, Viet-



American approaches were used to train local leaders

nam, and the Nile River's African countries participated in the workshop. The Alumnus networked and sharpened his knowledge on education for sustainable development.

Activity 3 "Using American Approaches from the Humphrey Fellowship year, Swedish Approaches, and Experiences of the Mekong River's Countries to Train Local Leaders in the MRD on Environmental Leadership Skills" was implemented on March 2009, in An Giang University. This activity consisted of 3 tasks.

In Task 1, on November-December 2008, the Alumnus investigated situational challenges in water resources management of the MRD to create training manuals for the environmental leadership training consisting of 3 visits to 3 provinces of the MRD for needs assessments.

Task 2 (on December 2008) was "Making a Manual in Environmental Leadership at An Giang University".

Task 3 "Conducting Sharing Experiences between the Leaders in Solving Water Problems and Training Them on Leadership Skills in a 3-day Training" was done, on March 2009, at An Giang University, with participation of 28 environmental leaders nominated by 13 provincial governments in the MRD. The training's contents were:

 Impacts and effects of environmental damages on community and socio-economic development;

- Present challenges and visions of the Delta;
- Principles and applications of policy and management;
- ♦ Synthetic scientific methods;
- ♦ Conflict management;
- ♦ Leadership.

Task 4 "Transmitting Environmental Leadership to Local Communities by Posting the training content on An Giang University website" was completed on March 2009.

Activity 4 "Exchanging Lessons from the Training in the MRD with Key People in Other Countries in the Mekong River Region" was accomplished in a meeting on March 2009 in China (sponsored by the SIDA). The Alumnus exchanged his activities experience with 21 participants from China, Vietnam and Thailand.

Activity 5 "Synthesizing gained information and transferring it for residents in provinces in the MRD for the sustainable development of the MRD" was supported by Department of Environmental Studies and Sustainable Development of An Giang University. Final documents were translated and published in Vietnamese on the University's website. These documents were also used for teaching at the University.



Workshop participants learn how to keep a stick balanced

In summary, the project achieved all planned objectives and trained environmental leaders for the MRD. At the moment, these leaders have high positions in governmental organizations and are sharing their leadership spirit with others. The project has high sustainability since these leaders with their enhanced skills on coaching, mentoring, and leadership will continuously build other leaders by training. Importantly, via the Alumnus, An Giang University became a key motivator to network leaders for the environmental protection of the entire MRD.

Nguyen Tran Nhan Tanh

2007-2008 Humphrey Alumnus

Fulbrighter Helps Farmers through Text Messaging

(Continued from page 5)

endeavors in Africa, South America, and other parts of Asia, Dung said. "If we're going to bring ICT to the world's poorest populations, we need to leverage the technology they have in their hands. The mobile phone can be a tool to access information that resides on software or in the cloud. This is how we can bring Web 2.0 to mobile users."

Recognizing the project's impact on people's lives and its potential to reduce the digital divide, in July 2009, Microsoft gave Dung the Circle of Excellence Award recognizing the company's finest

contributors.

A Vietnamese news broadcast about the pilot project is available on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjO0ncd9TXQ



One Year for Dreams that will Never End

Le Hong Diem (UGRAD 2009)

In Vietnam, it is said that either the smartest or the wealthiest can study abroad. I was born into a middle-class family in Vietnam, so my parents had to work very hard to make both ends meet let alone earn enough money to send me abroad. However, my dream to study abroad never stops in my heart. I am de-

termined and dedicated to realize that dream.

My opportunity came when I was chosen to be the first generation of Global Undergraduate Exchange Program, funded by U.S Department of State.

Eight months living in the States is the most memorable time of my life so far. I have made friends with people from every corner of the world. I have broadened my horizons and learned new things that I have never had a chance to experience before. I have enjoyed my 20 years in the most amazing way.

No, I know that I am not the richest. I am not even the smartest. The most important thing is that I dare to live with my dreams and aspire to make it come true.

Thanks to this wonderful program, I not only learned about a new



in my heart. I am de- Le Hong Diem and her UGRAD fellows at a gathering in the U.S.

culture, a new country, but I learned about myself. I am on the way to being a better person, and this one-year program in the U.S is a firm background for my future.

My life-time ambition is to become a successful Vietnamese diplomat. For this reason, during my time in the U.S, I tried my best to educate international friends about the new image of Vietnam. Vietnam does not just mean a war. Vietnam is also a country, a nation, a culture, a language and a history that dates back more than 4,000 years ago.

And I am happy that I made a very small contribution to let the world know more about my country.

On the other hand, the United States is also my second homeland. I have so many memories in this country and have owed Americans for their generous treatment that I really want to do something for this country and her people.

The relationship between the U.S and Vietnam is very special due to a very unpopular war.

As we all know, the Vietnam War is a

both countries. In Vietnam nowadays, many things have been forgiven, but not everything has been forgotten. I want to use my experience to help Vietnamese people understand more about America from a perspective that they have never known before. My love and appreciation for the United States of America does not come from the abundance of wealth in this country but from the diversity of the States, from the generosity and kindness of Americans that I am indebted to for the rest of my life, and from the aspiration and freedom ideals of the most democratic country in the world.

bitter era in the history of our

That is what I really want to change: a better future and friendship between Vietnam and the U.S.

First Annual Education USA Alumni Conference held in HCMC



Ambassador Michael Michalak gives a speech at the conference.

Hundreds of U.S. educated Vietnamese attended the fist ever EducationUSA Alumni conference in Ho Chi Minh city on July 25.

Held by IIE Vietnam under the sponsorship of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and Tan Tao Investment and Industry Corporation, this historic conference brought together Vietnam-

ese alumni of regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities in order to learn about and celebrate their many achievements, discuss challenges, and create a roadmap for future activities and projects.

The conference featured panel discussions devoted to "Reflections on the EducationUSA Experience," "Reentry Challenges Encountered and Overcome" and "Creating a Roadmap for the Future," as well as "Alumni Contributions to Vietnam's Development: A Cross-Generational Conversation," and afternoon breakout sessions.

According to information from IEE Vietnam, there are thousands

of U.S.-educated Vietnamese dating to the late 1980s. Many of them have made significant and, in some cases, cutting-edge contributions to their professions and to Vietnam's development. They represent different genera-



tions and regions of the country and work in a variety of sectors, including public, private and nongovernmental.

Did you know?

State Alumni website offers free access to over 20,000 journals, newspapers, magazines and grant opportunities worth \$33 billion. Check out these great resources at State Alumni's Online Resource Center:

https://alumni.state.gov/online-resources/online-research-center



eLibrary: ProQuest"s eLibrary contains full-text and multimedia reference essentials including more than 2,000 full-text magazines, newspapers, books, and transcripts--plus thousands of maps, pictures, educator-approved websites from Homework Central®, and audio/video files.



Gale Powerseach Plus: Search all Gale Databases from one platform, including InfoTrac Custom Journal Database for State Alumni, Academic OneFile, and InfoTrac OneFile, offering researchers a broad range of peer-reviewed content, trade publications, and more. InfoTrac contains over 18,000 sources, from Accounting Today to Zoology.



ICAST: Gateway to over 700 Free E-journals covering from Business & Managment, Chemistry, Mathematics, Media and Communication, to Physics & Social Sciences.



COS Funding Opportunities™ is the largest, most comprehensive database of available funding, containing more than 25,000 records representing over \$33 billion in funding.



State Alumni is an interactive, dynamic, and password-protected global community for all alumni of U.S. government sponsored exchange programs.

This global community offers you a place to:

- Network with alumni from all exchange programs;
- Share information about your alumni activities, ideas or news;
- Participate in Q&A Live discussions with experts; and
- Access resources such as grants, jobs, and research databases.

It is a central place for and by alumni. From sharing articles, news, ideas or participating in program or country-based communities, alumni members have the opportunity to contribute to a global community with more than 40,000 members.

With free access to over 20,000 journals, newspapers, magazines and grant opportunities worth \$33 billion – State Alumni was created to support you, and help you in your efforts once you are home.

If you have not registered with State Alumni, <u>click here</u> or go to http://alumni.state.gov and select Click here to register.

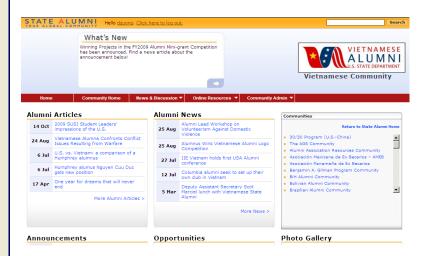
If you have any difficulty in registering with the website, send an email to Alumni Coordinator Le Thuy Duong (ledt@state.gov) or call 04-3850500, ext. 6002, cell phone: 0904016939.

Vietnamese Community on the Web

http://alumni.state.gov/vn

Once you have successfully registered with State Alumni website, you will be automatically assigned to the Vietnamese Community which offers you a place to:

- Network with Vietnamese alumni from all exchange programs;
- Publish your articles or updates about your publications, professional achievements or alumni activities;
- Be updated on State Alumni related activities in Vietnam, grant and job opportunities;
- Participate in Q&A Live discussions with the Embassy's officers;
- ♦ And more...



Vietnamese Alumni on Facebook



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